



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 10, 2014

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Supervisors Approve Blue Ribbon Commission Recommendations

Hoping to dramatically improve the child welfare system in Los Angeles County, the Board of Supervisors agreed to move forward on the recommendations made by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection.

In particular, the board moved ahead with a key recommendation to establish an Office of Child Protection with a director, which would oversee all of the county agencies that are involved in the child welfare system. The motion supporting the commission's recommendations was authored by Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina. It establishes a transition team that will provide formal advice to the Board regarding recommendations for child safety until the new Office of Child Protection is created.

The transition team, which will begin meeting monthly starting July 1, will have nine members who are experts in child welfare issues and will include five members chosen by the Board of Supervisors, a representative from the Blue Ribbon Commission, Juvenile Court, the County's Chief Executive Office and the Children's Commission.

After hearing testimony from committee members in front of a packed board room, Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, who authored the original motion last year to create the Blue Ribbon Commission, was optimistic structural reform could finally occur.

“The Blue Ribbon Commission has made it clear in their recommendations that the Los Angeles County child welfare system is in a ‘state of emergency,’” said the Supervisor. “Today is the day to adopt the Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations. This is a concept whose time has come.”

Supervisor Molina noted that too much time has passed without true change.

“The recommendations are all feasible and practical and most importantly they will improve child safety” she said “We can’t wait any longer. We must act now.”

Established in June 2013, the Blue Ribbon Commission came on the heels of the death of 8-year-old Gabriel Fernandez, who died last year as a result of horrific injuries from abuse. The commission, chaired by David Sanders, of the Casey Family Programs foundation, was made up of 10 child welfare experts appointed by each member of the Board of Supervisors.

They spent months interviewing officials and child advocates on how to improve the system and made 40 recommendations. Some of the recommendations include giving more money to relatives who care for children in foster care, providing better medical care for children removed from their homes and improving medical screening of infants who may be at risk.

Nearly a dozen foundations, several churches, advocates and organizations were present at the board hearing in support of the recommendations.

“This report looked beyond the frontlines of emergency response and included the safety of children,” said Janis Spires, chief executive of the Alliance for Children’s Rights. “It included mental health and child development needs and the need to support relatives who are the backbone of the child welfare system. We can’t put a short term price tag on protecting children in this county.”

Commissioner Leslie Gilbert Lurie urged the board to adopt all of the recommendations, rather than piecemeal.

“It is critical that the report be viewed by you holistically,” she said. “So that we can begin the process of sustainable reform.”

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